

# THE FAMILY STORY

## DR. VANDELLAR'S DEVICE.

"TELL me, Marx, that what you ask is impossible! My banking account is already overdrawn, you hold a bill of sale over this furniture and my horses and carriages, and I haven't a penny in the whole world but this handful of loose silver—and you don't want that, I suppose?"

"Well, seventeen and thirteenth wouldn't go far to pay off the seventeen hundred pounds, would it? Ask yourself, Mr. Vandellar," and Moses Marx smiled affably, rubbing his fat yellow hands one over the other as comfortably as though he were Dr. Vandellar's greatest friend, instead of his most implacable creditor.

The Doctor frowned inquiringly. "Seventeen hundred pounds?" he cried, incredulously. "What are you talking about? The bill you discounted was drawn for fifteen hundred only."

"Youth, I know," returned Mr. Marx, calmly; "but the other two hundred's extra interest for cashing a forgery!"

"Forgery!" exclaimed Dr. Vandellar, in well-assumed indignation and surprise. "That's an ugly word, Marx!" and his long, wiry hands twitched nervously, making Mr. Marx think how painful they would prove if dug vindictively into his fat throat.

"I know it's an ugly word, Doctor; but it isn't so ugly as the crime itself. What's the use of beating about the bush? I knew that the names on the back of your bill were forgeries when I discounted it."

"You infernal old scoundrel! But why did you, the shrewdest, most close-fisted money lender in London, discount a bill you knew to be forged?"

"For the simple reason, my friend, that I knew you'd have to take it up when it fell due."

"Then you've made a mistake; I can't. The bill's overdue now!"

"Oh, another day or two don't matter to me," said Marx, airily.

"But don't you see," explained the Doctor, impatiently, "don't you see that I'm broke—smashed altogether?"

"It can't be so bad as that? No, no. Now, Vandellar, my boy, you're joking; now, ain't you?"

"No," answered Vandellar, grimly, "I never was more serious in my life."

"Then, if that's the case," stormed Mr. Marx, his amiability suddenly vanishing, "you'll have to meet this bill to-morrow or go to prison!"

"Very well," said the Doctor, who grew calm as his creditor became excited. "If that's your decision, you may as well send for the police at once."

Now, Mr. Marx knew that to send Dr. Vandellar to prison would be to irrevocably lose the money, which he did not wish to do; so he instantly calmed down. "Look here, Vandellar," said he, "can't you come to some arrangement? You've got a lot of paying patients in the house—can't you squeeze some of them for a hundred or two?"

"I've pumped their purses dry, I'm afraid," returned Vandellar, sadly. "Those gold shares you recommended to me have swallowed up every penny lately. To be sure, there's old Sir Michael Trefusis; he's been with me some years now and I've got considerable influence over him. He isn't likely to last much longer, and he shouldn't be very fond of his nephew, if my words have had any effect. If I could get him to leave me something handsome under his will, would you wait until his death?"

"Oh, certainly, with pleasure. But I shall have to see the will, my boy—and I shall want to be sure it isn't a forgery, just as a matter of business, you know!"

"Dr. Vandellar flushed at the allusion."

"I shan't put myself doubly in your power, Marx," he said. "Will you call to-morrow? And I will tell you how I get on to-night. If possible, I'll get the matter settled before morning."

"I'll call at 10," agreed Mr. Marx, radiant at the prospect of recovering his money.

"Then, till morning, au revoir," said Vandellar, showing his visitor from the room. "No doubt I shall be ready for you."

Dr. Otto Vandellar, fashionable physician, medical specialist and daring speculator, was in a tight fix, but he meant to get out of it. There was only one way—that which he had indicated. Old, paralytic Sir Michael, at present under his tender care, must be coerced into making a will in his favor. That done, the old soldier's death would be merely a matter of time—and, perhaps, opportunity.

Being a man of action, the Doctor rose from his reverie and left his study with the intention of visiting his wealthy patient. As he ascended the stairs he heard the street door close with a bang. Meeting his housekeeper, Mrs. Mallinger, on the landing, Vandellar asked who had just gone out.

"Young Mr. Harold Trefusis, Sir Michael's nephew," the woman replied. "He had a private interview with his uncle, sir, and left the room in an awful hurry."

Left the room in a hurry! Shut the door after him with a bang! That seemed to imply anything but a pleasant interview between uncle and nephew, and Vandellar argued well for himself under the circumstances.

"Mrs. Mallinger," he said, curtly, "Sir Michael's state is precarious, and while he is under my care I will not have him annoyed. He must not be upset in this manner. Give orders that Mr. Trefusis is not to be admitted in future."

In another moment Dr. Vandellar entered Sir Michael's room. He would see how his patient was, and then, by persuasion or force, make him execute a short will bequeathing something handsome "to his dear friend and attentive physician, Otto Vandellar, M. D.," etc. He advanced to the bedside and called Sir Michael by name. There was no answer.

"Asleep," muttered Vandellar. "Sorry to disturb the old fellow, but it can't be helped."

So saying, he lit the lamp, for the wintry afternoon light was falling fast,

and, approaching the bed, placed his fingers on the silent occupant's wrist. He drew back with a start.

General Sir Michael Trefusis, K. C. B., was dead.

Dr. Vandellar stood for a moment staring blankly at the corpse. Death had stepped in to thwart his plans and absolute ruin must follow.

Must follow? Surely something could be done? Something must be done!

The Doctor locked the chamber door and sat down in a chair by the side of the dead man. For a minute or two he could not compel his thoughts to definite form; but slowly, under the influence of his indomitable will, they took shape.

Sir Michael was dead—so forcing him to sign a will in his favor was out of the question. But what of the iron box of bonds-to-bearer, and precious jewels brought from India, which the General insisted upon keeping in the cabinet by his bedside? The contents of that box were worth £10,000 or more, and were immediately realizable. The box was still in the cabinet, the Doctor saw, and the key was hanging around the dead man's neck, as usual. That iron box should be Vandellar's salvation, for he would swear that the original owner had given it to him on his deathbed. Of course, the thing was quite easy, and impending ruin would vanish in the sunshine of prosperity.

And then, like a cold hand laid upon his hot heart, came Vandellar to the recollection that such gifts, to be legal, must be conferred by hand, and in the presence of witnesses.

So it must be ruin after all unless—but, no, he would not put himself in the power of his servants by making them his accomplices in false swearing. With a sharp exclamation of rage and disappointment, Vandellar rose from his ghastly vigil, thinking bitterly that, as Sir Michael had died without a will, all his property, bonds and jewels included, would go to his heir-at-law, his nephew, Harold, from whom, by the irony of fate, he had parted in anger.

But just as his hand was on the key of the door Dr. Vandellar turned back again to the bedside. He had thought of a device which might secure to him the valuables he so coveted.

An adept in electrical and galvanic science, Dr. Vandellar possessed all the newest apparatus for experimenting upon animals and human beings supposed to be dead, with a view of bringing them back to life. Many such experiments had been made by the Doctor. He had never succeeded in restoring a subject to life, but he had succeeded in making corpses imitate the movements of living bodies. He had also utilized his ventriloquist ability—acquired as an amateur entertainer in his student days—and in some of his demonstrations with his disguised voice persuaded students and onlookers that his galvanic corpses were living, speaking beings. True, in such cases the lights had always been low, and no examination had been made until he explained the deception.

All this flashed through the active Doctor's brain with a rapidity of thought, and he instantly decided to put his idea into practice, risky as it was. Sir Michael's body was not yet cold, and the plan could be carried out forthwith.

Softly Vandellar quitted the death chamber, locking the door behind him, and thinking how fortunate it was for him that it was Sir Michael's nurse who was out for her daily walk, so that he could enter his surgery, Vandellar quickly adjusted his electric apparatus, and carried it up to Sir Michael's room. He soon fixed it beneath the clothes and attached the electric communicators to the proper parts of the dead man's frame. He rehearsed the conversation and effects once or twice, and though any suspicious witness might not have been deceived by the jerky, hesitating movements he succeeded in producing, he considered that they would pass muster with his housekeeper and butler, whom he intended to call as witnesses. Placing the lamp so that the dead man's face was thrown into the shadow by the bed curtains, and arranging the electric apparatus so that he could govern it while pretending to support the sinking invalid, Vandellar unlocked the door and rang the bell violently.

"Mallinger," he said, as the housekeeper entered, "fetch Jurgan, the butler, quickly. Sir Michael is worse, and wishes to say something in the presence of witnesses before the end, which is, I fear, only too near!"

Jurgan, lank and frightened, and Mrs. Mallinger, stout and fussy, soon hurried in together, and, in obedience to their master's orders, sat down at some distance from the bed.

"Now, Mallinger and Jurgan," said Vandellar, solemnly, "please pay the strictest attention to what passes, for you may have to repeat it upon oath."

Then, bending over the corpse, he continued:

"They are here, now, Sir Michael. Oh, you wish Jurgan to give you the iron box from the cabinet there?"

The dead man's jaws worked convulsively, and from his lips, apparently, came the monosyllable, "Yes."

"Jurgan," Vandellar commanded, "do as Sir Michael desires."

Jurgan rose and handed the box to the Doctor, who placed it in Sir Michael's hands; and then with awful leading questions and short, decided answers, Dr. Vandellar proceeded with his grim mummery until his two servants had duly witnessed the legal handing over of the precious box and heard, as they thought, Sir Michael's words conferring the gift. The box and key once in his possession, Vandellar dismissed the awed witnesses to their customary duties.

Dr. Vandellar rapidly removed his apparatus to the surgery; and then, having returned to Sir Michael's room, he again summoned Mallinger and informed her that the poor old gentleman had suddenly passed away.

At this juncture, and before Van-

dellar had an opportunity of opening the box and gleaning over its contents, two unexpected visitors were simultaneously announced. One was Harold Trefusis; the other was Moses Marx. Vandellar decided to be at home to both, but he saw Marx first. "Well," he inquired, impatiently, "what brought you back so soon?"

"I just called to see if you were keeping cool, Doctor—I mean, I hope you ain't going to do anything so wicked as to commit suicide. Think what a dreadful thing it is—and remember that suicide invalidates your life insurance, my friend!"

Vandellar laughed. Then he hastily explained the circumstances, though not the modus operandi of the gift of the box.

"Now," he said, "as the bonds and jewelry will be deposited at my bank as soon as the doors open in the morning, I suppose you will take my check in exchange for the bill?"

Marx was anxious to get rid of the bill, and he knew that the Doctor's check, though it might not be met, would be a safer thing to sue upon than a bill he admitted he knew to be forged when he cashed it, so he made but little demur, merely asking, "as a matter of bitness," if the bonds were really in the box.

"I saw them there yesterday," said Vandellar, truthfully. "Is that good enough for you?"

Marx thought it was, and handed the forged bill to Vandellar. The Doctor then tore the incriminating paper into fragments, which he threw into the fire.

"Now, come along, Marx," he cried, "and support me in my interview with the despoiled heir!"

The pair proceeded to the library, where they found Harold Trefusis impatiently waiting.

"I am told that my Uncle Michael is dead," said Harold. "It's a surprise to me, as he seemed rather better this afternoon. But, as his only surviving relative, I should like to see the poor old gentleman, and to take formal possession of his effects."

"I shall be very glad if you will do so," said Vandellar, smiling blandly. "Though I must make an exception of the iron box in which, as you know, your lamented uncle kept all his bonds payable to bearer and his Indian jewels. That box and its contents, Sir Michael gave to me, in the presence of witnesses, about an hour before his death."

"What?" exclaimed the young man. "My uncle give you that box and its contents? Why?"

"Pray be calm," interrupted Vandellar. "Of course, if your uncle left no will you, as heir-at-law, inherit all his property, and the loss of the bonds and jewels is naturally irritating. Still—"

"Still," echoed Harold, "I can't understand my uncle giving you the box. Are you sure he was in his right mind when he did so?"

"Your uncle, sir, was as sane as you or I," said Vandellar, with admirably assumed dignity, "as the witnesses in whose presence the gift was made will readily testify."

"Then," said Harold, decisively, "if Uncle Michael was sane I am mad, for this afternoon he handed me the whole of the contents of the box, ordering me to deposit them at his bankers. He nearly left it too late, for though I dashed out of this house and hurried to the bank I only reached it as the doors were about to be closed."

Vandellar and Marx stared blankly at each other. The Doctor sent for the box. It was opened and its total emptiness proved beyond a doubt that Harold Trefusis was perfectly sane.

Mr. Marx, despite the plea of poverty, has still money to lend on "favorable terms," but Dr. Vandellar's condition proves that the wicked do not always flourish like a green bay tree.—Tid-Bits.

**PREPARING FOR AGGRESSION.**

Great Britain Has Ports at Strategic Points on the Yukon.

A party of miners from the headwaters of the Yukon has arrived at Port Townsend on the schooner Mary Buhne from Oonahaska and report that the Canadian Government is establishing well-equipped fortifications on commanding bluffs overlooking the strategic points on Forty Mile Creek and elsewhere along the supposed boundary line.

A large company of Canadian military police are busily engaged in exploring the country for mountain passes both in Alaskan and Canadian territory. A loop of Forty Mile Creek runs into British territory, and to reach the most valuable mines it is necessary for American miners to pass through a small portion of foreign territory. The river is very narrow, and the police have erected on towering cliffs fortresses which completely guard the travel on the river. At several other points breastworks, substantially built of stone, have been erected, and, on the whole, the actions of the police would indicate that preparations are being made to accommodate large squads of troops at various points along the boundary and particularly in the vicinity of the placer mines.

However, the police are very kind to the American miners, rendering them every assistance possible and in many ways bestowing small favors and endeavoring to allay suspicion or unpleasant inquiries as to the objects of such warlike preparations. Small detachments attired in citizens' clothes have visited all the important mining camps reconnoitering the surrounding country. What their object was they do not state. Thomas Buckman, a Yukon miner, who has been on Forty Mile Creek for three or four years, speaking of the military posts erected by the Canadian police, said: "All their fortifications are built of heavy stone, through which are portholes commanding the paths and rivers. A few men properly armed could withstand a large force of soldiers. The police themselves are noncommittal, and the commandant says the forts are to shelter the provincial police. Some of the very richest placer mines of the Yukon region are under the immediate command of these forts, of which ten have been erected this year."—San Francisco Chronicle.

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